

PRAMILA JAYAPAL
7TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON REGULATORY REFORM,
COMMERCIAL, AND ANTITRUST LAW

Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515-4707

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May 4, 2017

Scott Pruitt
Environmental Protection Agency
Administrator
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

We write to strongly urge you to strengthen and build on the successes of the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Program. Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, called to attention the fact that certain communities face disproportionate impacts of climate change, namely communities of color, low-income communities, indigenous peoples, people with limited English proficiency, and people living with disabilities.i

As the administrator of the EPA, you are the Chair of the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG) established by EO 12898, and you are in the unique position of being able to build on the progress that has been made to ensure that environmental justice principles are incorporated into the work being done by the EPA and other IWG member agencies.

According to the *Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Environmental Justice Progress Report*, "Many low-income, minority, and tribal communities are disproportionately impacted by air pollution and are not able to participate in environmental decisions due to barriers that prevent them from meaningfully engaging in the process. As a result, their voices are often unheard."ⁱⁱ The EPA's Environmental Justice Program has the capacity to help close that gap. So far, it has had documented success on projects and initiatives around the country, ranging from providing funding for urban farming to connecting frontline communities to the EPA rulemaking process.ⁱⁱⁱ

It is extremely important to continue this progress, because more than 20 years after EO 12898 was signed, there are still documented disparities in how communities are affected by climate change and air pollution. For example, the prevalence of asthma for people who live in these frontline communities is higher than it is for the general population. When compared to white children, African American children are hospitalized at a rate of 2 to 1 and are four times more likely to die from asthma.^{iv} Race is the number one indicator of whether or not a person lives near a hazardous waste site, and many of these siting decisions are carried out by the EPA, underlining the importance the Agency continuing to incorporate environmental justice into its work.^v

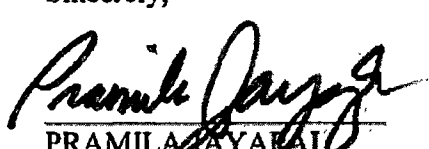
Following Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, we saw extreme disparities in how disaster mitigation and relief were distributed among communities. FEMA's first permanent disaster recovery center in Mississippi was installed more than 15 miles from frontline communities in Gulfport, and HUD funds were disproportionately weighted toward homeowners, rather than low-income renters.^{vi}


Native Americans and Indigenous peoples are facing particular challenges because their traditional places, food sources, and lifestyles are at risk due to climate change. Alaska native and native coastal communities have already started to suffer from the negative side effects of climate change, being forced to leave their homes in search of a new beginning. Shellfish populations are suffering due to ocean acidification as a result of carbon dioxide emissions, threatening the ability of indigenous peoples to harvest shellfish.vii

EO 12898 set the framework for incorporating environmental justice into the decision-making processes of the EPA and other IWG agencies. We must act on climate change, recognizing that frontline communities have continually been most impacted by its effects.

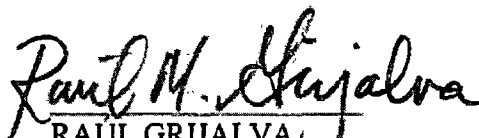
We urge you to continue the work of the EPA's Environmental Justice Program, and ensure that the EPA is making decisions and developing policies that address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on our most vulnerable communities.

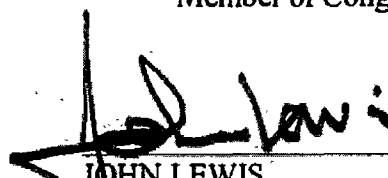
Sincerely,



PRAMILA JAYARAM
Member of Congress



A. DONALD McEACHIN
Member of Congress



NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGAN
Member of Congress


RAUL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

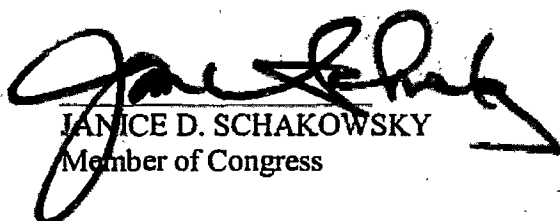

JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress



JUDY CHU
Member of Congress



LUIS V. GUTIERREZ
Member of Congress



JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



JOSE E. SERRANO
Member of Congress



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ
Member of Congress

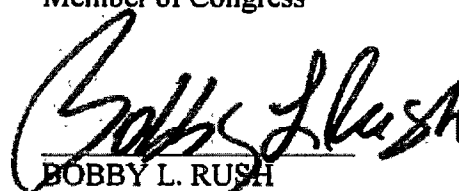

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress

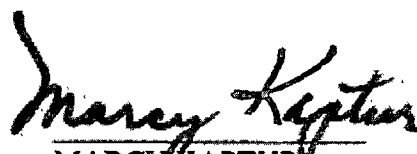

DAVID N. CICILLINE
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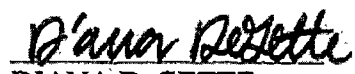

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON
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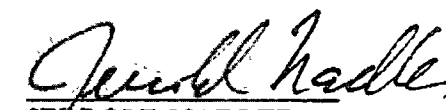

TERRI A. SEWELL
Member of Congress



BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

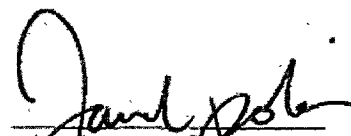

ALAN S. LOWENTHAL
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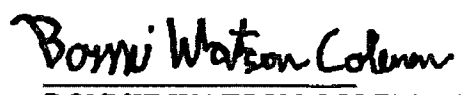

MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress


DIANA DeGETTE
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JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress



KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

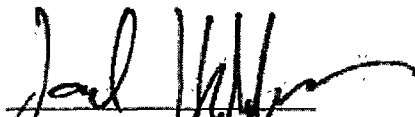

JARED POLIS
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BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



TONY CARDENAS
Member of Congress



MARK POCAN
Member of Congress



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

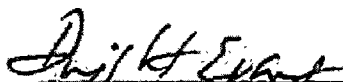

RAUL RUIZ
Member of Congress

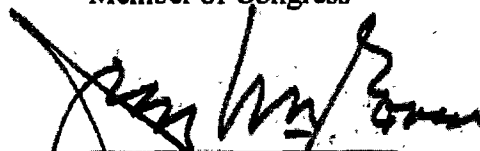

MATT CARTWRIGHT
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ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress



DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress



DONALD M. PAYNE, Jr.
Member of Congress

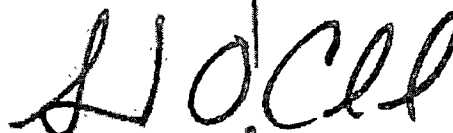

DWIGHT EVANS
Member of Congress

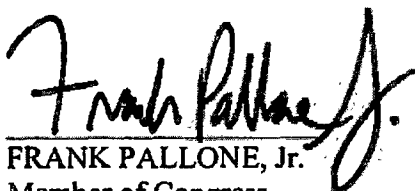

JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress


JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress



COLLEEN HANABUSA
Member of Congress


CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
Member of Congress

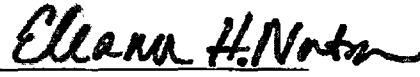

SALUD O. CARBAJAL
Member of Congress


FRANK PALLONE, Jr.
Member of Congress

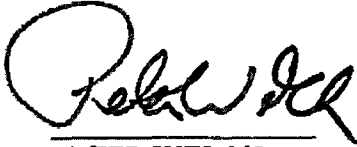

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
Member of Congress



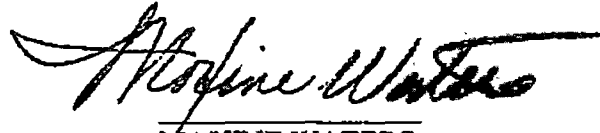
ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress



ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress

i Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 3 C.F.R. 59 (1994).

ii FY 2015 Annual Environmental Justice Progress Report (Rep.). (2016). Washington, DC: Environmental Protection Agency.

iii Ibid.

iv *Children's Environmental Health Disparities: Black and African American Children and Asthma* (Rep.). (2014). Washington, DC: Environmental Protection Agency.

v Covert, Bryce. (2016, February 18). *Race Best Predicts Whether You Live Near Pollution*. The Nation.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/race-best-predicts-whether-you-live-near-pollution/>

vi *Environmental Justice through the Eye of Hurricane Katrina* (Rep.). (2008). Retrieved April 12, 2017, from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; Health Policy Institute website:
https://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/_media/pdf/key_issues/Environment_policy.pdf

vii Crimmins, A., Balbus, J., Gamble, J.L., Beard, C.B., Bell, J.E., Dodgen, D., Eisen, R.J., Fann, N., Hawkins, M.D., Herring, S.C., Jantarasami, L., Mills, D.M., Saha, S., Sarofim, M.C., Trtanj, J., and Ziska, L. (2016). *The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment* (Rep.). Washington, DC: U.S. Global Change Research Program.

